1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Everyone knows where the boundaries lie between village areas, or between hamlets and other settlements, and there is plenty of land for expansion and for the wandering cattle nomads who traverse the area annually moving their cattle north and south with the coming and going of the rains.

The settlements are all made up of walled compounds and within these are the mud-walled houses with conical thatched roofs, or sometimes grass mat walls with thatched roofs. In the northeast of Bornu the people specialize in a bee-hive shaped house of bound thatch which can be picked up and moved and can reach a size of twenty to thirty feet in diameter, although ten to fifteen feet is more common. A compound is almost always rectangular in shape with mud or grass mat walls and internal partitions. There is only one entrance which is often a house with two doors so that there is a shelter at the doorway for people to gather and visit with the household head. The compounds in any settlement are always arranged in a "U"-shape with the open end towards the west and the closed end on the east. The arms of the U then form the north and south sides of the open plaza where all the major events of town take place. Although in very tiny settlements, big cities, or settlements that have lost a great many people, this U-shape is not often easy to discover, it can be seen by simply asking people where they have their central plaza. When this is pointed out, the questioner knows exactly where to look for the house of the senior political leader of the settlement since his household is always at the bottom of the U in the center facing west. Parenthetically, this means that when individuals or groups pray and bow down toward the east in the open plaza, which they often do, they face the doorway of their local political leader's compound.

Around the villages are fields of millet, the major food staple, guinea corn, ground-nuts, the major cash crop, and numerous specialized crops of vegetables or gourds that vary from place to place depending upon local conditions. Almost everybody does a little farming while goods not produced within the household itself are purchased at local weekly markets that dot the countryside in each of the major villages.

In their culture the Kanuri share ideas about religion, social organization, and subsistence patterns with many of the other peoples of the Western Sudan. Even esoteric items such as pre-pubescent boys' hair styles are shared across wide areas of the southern and central Sahara ranging as far away as Morocco. In their patterns of dress—workshirts and long ground-length robes for men, long shirts and saris for women—they again share many items with surrounding peoples as they do in their love of horses which give a man prestige unless he is one of the few in the cities that owns an automobile. Their language, Kanuri, is not related to other languages of Nigeria, but is shared and closely related to a large group of tongues called Central Saharan that ranges from the Tibesti highlands in northern Chad to Bornu in the southwest and the Darfur region in the modern nation of Sudan, in the southeast. It is a graceful language in which the verb comes at the end of the sentence as in Latin and in which there are many polite circumlocutions for saying things diplomatically. Thus if I wish to say a man is untrustworthy, I do not say it outright. Instead I say quietly that he has narrow eyes, which comes from the saying, "A man with narrow eyes has no shame," he lacks proper respect for his obligations to others. There are many greetings which are adjusted to social rank,

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888 565 589 [434] [788] on by intermediaries because of the seclusion common among upper class women. If the activity has proven successful during their life it is carried on into old age, and if not then it is dropped. Thus old women, like men, in Bornu have a place in society. It is not generally a position of great authority, although there are some notable exceptions. Certainly, however, deference and respect for the aged is a universal feature of good Kanuri manners. Blessing the young is a cultural symbol of this respect. Old people bless young people when the latter go on trips or there is some special event such as a birth or the naming of a new baby. The seriousness with which such blessings are given and received is evidence of the importance placed on the special capacities of wisdom and propriety that the Kanuri associate with old age.

Death

761 Just as pregnancy marks the potential beginning of life, so death marks the end. The Kanuri have a quiet accepting attitude toward death; it is unpleasant, but it is always there. The high mortality rate for children, and the desirability that as many as possible in a community attend a funeral means that Kanuri adults attend many more of these ceremonies than people in western society. Thus death and funerals are much more commonly noted and accepted than in the United States where the entire subject is considered repugnant.

764 775 621 The Kanuri believe that going to funerals helps the deceased person to achieve paradise. The more prayers said by as many people as possible and as many religious leaders as possible, then the better are the chances of success. Indeed this is not only true in death but throughout life. People go to a particular funeral because the deceased was "a man of our town," or they attend one in another locality because the person was a relative or a friend. Not to go, even to the funeral of a very low status person of one's own village, is unthinkable. A high ranking official of Magumeri remarked at a funeral of a poor, very old, butcher that only twenty years ago he would not have shaken the hand of such a man, but times have changed. However, when asked whether he would have attended such a man's funeral in former times he looked incredulous; there could be no question about it if they were of the same community. Thus death ties a community together and expresses one's membership in it. No matter what other differences may exist between people, there is one occasion when the only criterion for active participation is a common residence in the same locality.

764 621 The compulsion to go to funerals is very strong. Thus a young woman who teaches in the Bornu secondary school system and is highly westernized in many of her attitudes told me that she had to go to a funeral about 100 miles away in the bush. This involved very uncomfortable travel by lorry, then a long horseback ride in the rainy season. However, she never once considered the possibility that she might not attend even though there was every likelihood she would miss the ceremony. Her relatives were having a funeral—therefore she must go; there was no choice although she preferred not to go.

764 Kanuri burial ceremonies themselves are held as close to the first morning after death as is possible. I observed only one exception to this rule; a very old man

437 go out to the farmers with cash advances for their crops. The
432 farmer sells his crop to the man who has advanced cash to him.
441 The nuts go to the middleman, who then brings them in bulk to the company which gave him the large cash advance much earlier. Sometimes he is unable to get the nuts, either because it has been a bad season, or because other buyers have bought them. Too often the money which has been advanced to him is long since spent. Occasionally a man who has taken a cash advance from one company to buy nuts sells the nuts which he has bought to another company which is offering a higher price. He will then return his original cash advance to the first company with his regrets.

Thus the concepts of cash and credit have become working parts of Kanuri culture. Individuals borrow cash in many different sorts of situations. Actual cash for paying a bride-price, or for buying a bicycle, is much less important than having sources of credit from whom one can borrow. A man who is a shrewd trader can increase his wealth rapidly in present-day Bornu, and a wealthy class of traders exists today whose members were poor villagers a generation ago.

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[554] An interesting consequence of the growth of a wealthy trading class is that among the Kanuri the bulk of those who take the pilgrimage to Mecca comes from this class. For centuries the title of Alhaji, given to one who undertakes the pilgrimage, has been a sign of piety, of holiness and personal sacrifice. The trip to Mecca was a difficult and expensive one,

178 788 though there have always been people who walked or rode donkeys. 556 441 [509] The modern pilgrimage is usually made by truck, or by chartered plane from Maiduguri to Mecca. A wealthy man, and this usually means someone engaged in trade, can travel to Mecca and back by plane for the sum of 120 pounds sterling.

4. The Social System.

177 178 Many of the political and economic changes brought about by the increasing integration of Kanuri culture within the greater orbit of Western culture have resulted in further internal changes within Kanuri life. These are clearly manifested in the shifting patterns of the social structure of modern Kanuri 175 565 society. At the time of the empire, before European contact, the aristocracy was a clearly defined social class whose membership exercised political power, controlled available sources of wealth, and enjoyed the prestige deriving from nobility of [554] family. These characteristics were unified and symbolized in a title conferred upon a man by the Shehu and inherited in a gen- 565 178 eral sense, along with wealth and political office. Many of these wealthy and powerful aristocratic families continue to exist today, and most of the District Heads and other important political figures are members of such families.

Although the controlling leadership of Kanuri society today can still be traced directly to the aristocracy of former times and still bears many of its characteristics, the system is no longer as stable and as self-perpetuating as it formerly

782 untary alms. Zakat, the tithe for the church, is not given
[793] by the Kanuri. Consequently the clergy are dependent entirely
[792] on sadaka. Koranic specialists who devote themselves entirely to study of the Koran, and to the teaching of the Koran are called Malams. The Malams are supported by sadaka which devout Kanuri are expected to give.

788 The fifth and last Pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage.
177 All who can manage the pilgrimage to Mecca (haj) without hardship are expected at some time to make this trip. The Mais and Shehus undertook the pilgrimage, and in fact, el Kanemi spent some years in Mecca. Large numbers of the Kanuri populace have also made the pilgrimage. Its effect has been to tie Kanuri society to the larger world of Islam, in that way to share in a larger community and to bring back to Bornu new ideas and new products. Pilgrims who travel across the width of Africa by truck from Lake Chad to the Red Sea, find that they have a common bond with other Moslems in the towns through which they pass.

78 The nature of religious observance among the Kanuri can be
182 seen in their adherence to the Pillars of Islam. But Islam
[576] enters into Kanuri life at numerous additional points: in the
[275] common greetings between two individuals when they meet; in the
[262] abstention from any form of alcoholic beverage which tends to
[771] be widely observed; in food taboos; in Koranic charms which most
[757] individuals wear; and in the use of ink from verses of the Koran
796 as cures for illness. Most life crises are marked by religious

of the dandal to watch.

368 788 The central mosque of Geidam also faces on the dandal, along its northern edge. Geidam has several smaller mosques, and although it is not necessary for a Moslem to go to the mosque to pray, Friday prayers at 2 PM (Duar) have become communal prayers. At that time almost the entire adult male community of Geidam gathers to pray. The mosque itself will hold only a small portion of the community, no more than 300 or so. All others gather under the shade of trees which line the northern and southern edges of the dandal, and while the Liman leads prayers in the mosque itself, all go through the ritual positions of prayer in unison following his lead. On the Friday Sabbath, the mosque and the dandal become the focus of attention.

368 Along the dandal, to the right and left of the entrance-way to the Ajari, are a number of buildings housing branches of the administration of the town. On the northern edge is the police charge-office, the court, and the community reading room. The courthouse serves daily as a center of activity. On the southern edge are the police barracks, the prison, the dispensary and [594] the primary school. Along with these compounds housing various types of officialdom are to be found the compounds of several important men whose gateways also face out onto the dandal.

The dandal, leading up to the chinna of the political head of a town, is the traditional political center of that town. Just as the market-place serves as the focus of all local commerce, the dandal serves as the focus of political, ceremonial and religious activity.

[GEIDAN]

second day. This is the time for paying the zakat, the alms-tax. Rich men give away clothes and money as sadaka at this time so that they will have good luck. Poor people give away kola nuts and perfume. This is also the time when members of the various jili give small gifts to members of linked jili with whom they have joking relationships (nəngima). As the sun sets on the second day all women bang on their water storage pots to drive away the jinn (spirit) who brings sickness. On the second night everyone also bathes. People, women in particular, then go to the houses of Malams where the Malam reads a section of the Koran which is then repeated by those present. The Malam then assigns counting of prayer beads (tajimi) for each person. Later in the night dancing is held in a central area, and many guns are discharged. Little boys mill about knocking sparks off smouldering pieces of wood onto other little boys.

The last of the important festival days is the Prophet's Birthday, called variously Ngumɔri Kura (great festival), Ngumɔri Kuguibe (kugui means chicken), since chickens are sacrificed at this time, or Mamaludu.

F. Marriage, Family and Household.

In the preceding chapter, the general features of Kanuri culture were presented and it was pointed out that this was largely ideal culture. The present chapter, in contrast, deals with a single community and describes behavior as it occurs

radio-owning groups knowledge of the Hausa language is almost unanimous. In addition, all of the NA Malams speak English (see Table XVI) as well, so that they can most benefit from possession of a radio, and in fact the entire group owns radios.

Many individuals own photographs of themselves, but once again the three groups who owned wrist watches, bicycles and radios also tend to have photographs of themselves. In the case of the Canteen Operators an extraneous factor enters. Five of the six Canteen Operators have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and in the course of making the trip, have had passport photographs taken of themselves. Three groups, the Koranic Malams, the Kabuna, and the Low-status Individuals have never had photographs taken of them, and among the Talaka only one of the eight has had his photograph taken.

The last column in Table XVIII notes possession, or previous ownership of a horse. A horse is of course not an item of Western origin. It is included here to provide a comparison with some of the Western items previously discussed, particularly the bicycle. In only four groups are there to be found individuals who have never owned a horse. Five of the Talaka have never owned a horse, and in fact none of the eight Talaka owns a horse at present. Two of the NA Malams have never owned horses and it is clear that for members of this group the expense of buying and keeping a horse is not the primary factor as it is for most of the lower class groups. Two other NA Malams own horses which they do not keep in Geidam as they have little use for them. In comparison, five of the six NA Malams own bicycles.

#177 #829 805 #788 Column B represents the most common response to this question. Thirty-five individuals said that a watch was useful because one then knew when to pray. Ritual prayer takes place five times each day, at set times of the day (see Chapter II). These are usually determined by the position of the sun in the sky; the benefit of a watch in helping one to know when to pray is therefore obvious. Some individuals added that a watch was particularly helpful in knowing when to pray when it is cloudy; others noted that in the bush, when no one else was about, it was helpful to have a watch to know when to pray. In connection with prayer, three individuals noted that by having a watch one knew when to arise in the early morning before the sun was up in order to count one's prayer beads (tajimi). Similarly, four people noted that you knew when to wake before the sun was up to eat something in the month of Ramadan. Since prayer times regulate the divisions of the day, six people added that by having a watch one knew when to eat (in relation to prayer), and two said that one knew when to go to sleep (a non sequitur). Several people specifically noted that knowing the times for ritual prayer was the only use of a watch. All the individuals in two groups put forth this reason, among others, for having a watch. These groups are: Aristocracy and NA Malams. Seven of the eight Talaka offered this reason. On the other hand, only one of the three Koranic Malams offered this as an example of the usefulness of a watch. Apparently the other Koranic Malams do not feel that a watch is of any assistance in

* [565] * [634] [792]

[GEIDAM]

*177 805 *829 * 788 helping one to know when to pray. The traditional ways of knowing the times for prayer are adequate for them.

[792] The four types of response to the question concerning the *177 805 *829 128 usefulness of a wrist watch can be ranked as to thoroughness of understanding of its usefulness, as well as degree of acculturation. Column A indicates no knowledge and represents the least acculturated responses. Column B reveals slightly more understanding, and a greater degree of acculturation. The responses in column C all link the usefulness of knowing the time to work of a European nature. This is a somewhat more acculturated response, and it also reveals a good deal about attitudes towards European types of employment and towards the bureaucracy. All of these responses indicate in some way that the individual knows when to arrive at work, when to leave for lunch and when to return from lunch, and finally when to leave *[634] work for the day. It is understandable that five of the NA Malams, who all work for the provincial government, should have [792] offered this as one of the uses of a watch. It is interesting *[554] that two others who do not work for any governmental body, one a Koranic Malam and the other a Low-status drummer, should have noted the close relation between the need to measure units of time and European or government employment. These two both responded (*c) that for one who does European work or works for the government, a watch is useful, implying at the same time that for most Kanuri (most true Kanuri?) it has no real use. The most bureaucratized answer was offered by the local